
**HISTORIC PRESERVATION REVIEW BOARD
STAFF REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION**

Landmark/District:	Mount Pleasant Historic District	(x) Consent calendar
Address:	1635 Harvard Street NW	
Meeting Date:	July 22, 2021	(x) Alterations
Case Number:	21-418	(x) Concept

The applicant, Erik Hoffland, architect and agent for property owners Megan Stohner Conway and Jack Conway, requests the Board's review of a concept to: construct a belvedere-type third-floor addition in the middle of the roof; reconstruct a two-story side addition; alter the garage by lengthening it and constructing a rooftop deck; replace the windows and make alterations to openings; erect fences; excavating window wells and a rear areaway; etc. This report will discuss the issues more important for Board consideration.

Garage

The garage is nondescript, but of an age to technically contribute to the character of the historic district. Of course, no contributing/noncontributing list was required at the time the historic district was designated, and the Board has since allowed the demolition and alteration of the lesser of the 1910s and 1920s garages as not unduly affecting the character of the historic district. For a roof deck, an open rail is almost always preferable to a parapet at better retaining the fabric and form of such a structure and keeping it low, but the present zoning rules require railings of roof decks to be set back a distance equal to their height, which, without a variance, makes such decks nearly unworkable. The finished height would be nearly fourteen feet. There is a challenge of a brick parapet sufficiently matching the brick below, meaning that the entirety is likely to be painted. A spiral stair would provide access from the yard, and the deck would be connected to the house's second floor by extension of the deck.¹

Side addition

A set-back one-story side porch was long ago enclosed, and it received a second story to serve as a bathroom. The brick piers and roof overhang at the first floor would be retained, with both floors otherwise reconstructed on the same footprint to extend the kitchen and one of the second-floor baths. The design is more compatible than the present condition and, importantly, the structure still fits below the house's eave. Complementary colors darker than white would be appropriate, lest the second story appear too classical for this 1915 Mediterranean-style house.

Miscellaneous alterations

The house sits on an eminence and is set back from the street. Most of the minor exterior work will have little impact on the perceived character of the property. But many materials and

¹ Such a connection may be substantial enough that it causes a zoning problem, effectively extending the house into the required rear yard.

products have not yet been specified, so any concept approval will have to be conditioned on the exterior elements conforming to the standards and guidelines.

Roof addition

This house has a green-tiled hipped roof surrounding a nearly flat central roof. The attic would be heightened by constructing a belvedere, set in from the roof ridges on each side. This addition would be visible from the alley, but the side yards are probably narrow enough to render the structure invisible from the ground between this house and its immediate neighbors. The roof is wide and shallow enough that, coupled with the elevation, the addition is unlikely to be seen from in front of the house. However, the increasing elevation of the street to the east makes it possible that such a structure would be seen from the intersection of Harvard with Argonne Place.

Staff has requested a mock-up to evaluate all these views. It is forthcoming, but it had not been arranged at the time of writing. Without the confidence to be certain one way or another, it seems unproductive for the Board to have to discuss the matter, instead of simply approving the idea with the condition that it not be seen from the public streets, minimizing it as necessary to ensure this. For the sake of blending it in from any vantage point, the color of the belvedere's roofing and framing should be the same as that of the tile roof.

Recommendation

HPO recommends that the Board approve the concept as consistent with the purposes of the preservation law and delegate further review to staff, with the conditions that: 1) the belvedere addition be invisible from Harvard Street and Argonne Place, to be evaluated by a pre-construction mock-up and re-evaluated during construction, and to be adjusted as necessary to meet this standard; 2) the color of the framing and roofing of the belvedere addition match that of the house's principal roofing; 3) the exterior materials and products be specified as consistent with the Board's standards.